IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A developer, comprising:

a base toner containing at least a binding resin and a coloring agent and having a volume average particle diameter ~~less than our equal to 7~~ of 2 to 8 μm; and

inorganic fine particles;

wherein the base toner satisfies $105 \leqq$ SF-1 $\leqq 130$, and $120 \leqq$ SF-2 $\leqq 180$, ~~and SF-1 < SF-2,~~

wherein SF-1 = ((absolute maximum length of a particle of the base toner)^2/area of the particle of the base toner)$\times(\pi/4)\times 100$,

wherein SF-2 = (peripheral length of the particle of the base toner)^2/(area of the base toner)$\times(1/4\pi)\times 100$,

wherein the inorganic fine particles have an average particle diameter that ranges between 30 nm to 160 nm and an average degree of roundness greater than or equal to 0.98 and less than or equal to 0.996,

wherein the degree of roundness is calculated as a peripheral length of a circle having an area equal to an area of a binarized image of an inorganic fine particle divided by a peripheral length of the image of the inorganic fine particle.

Claim 2 (Original): The developer as claim in claim 1, wherein the inorganic fine particles are formed as silica.

Claim 3 (Previously Presented): The developer as claimed in claim 1, wherein the inorganic fine particles are formed as spherical shaped hydrophobic silica fine particles using a sol-gel technique.

Claim 4 (Original): The developer as claimed in claim 1, wherein the developer contains further inorganic fine particles having an average particle diameter which is smaller than the inorganic fine particles.

Claim 5 (Original): The developer as claimed in claim 1, wherein the developer is combined with a magnetic particle to function as a carrier.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): An image forming apparatus, comprising:

[[a]] at least one developing unit for developing an electrostatic latent image formed on an electrostatic latent image carrier body with a developer to form a toner image, wherein ~~the~~ each developing unit comprises ~~said~~ a developer;

a transfer unit for transferring the toner image to a transfer medium;

wherein ~~the~~ each developer includes a combination and a carrier,

wherein the combination includes a base toner containing at least a binding resin and a coloring agent and having a volume average particle diameter ~~less than our equal to 7~~ of 2 to 8 μm, and inorganic fine particles,

wherein the carrier has a magnetic particle,

wherein the base toner satisfies $105 \leqq$ SF-1 $\leqq 130$, and $120 \leqq$ SF-2 $\leqq 180$, ~~and SF-1 < SF-2,~~

wherein SF-1 = ((absolute maximum length of a particle of the base toner)^2/area of the particle of the base toner)$\times(\pi/4)\times 100$,

wherein SF-2 = (peripheral length of the particle of the base toner)^2/(area of the base toner)$\times(1/4\pi)\times 100$,

wherein the inorganic fine particles have an average particle diameter that ranges between 30 nm to 160 nm and a spherical degree of roundness greater than or equal to 0.98 and less than or equal to 0.996,

wherein the degree of roundness is calculated as a peripheral length of a circle having an area equal to an area of a binarized image of an inorganic fine particle divided by a peripheral length of the image of the inorganic fine particle.

Claim 7 (Original): The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein the inorganic fine particles are formed as silica.

Claim 8 (Previously Presented): The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein the inorganic fine particles are formed as spherical shaped hydrophobic silica fine particles using a sol-gel technique.

Claim 9 (Original): The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein the developer contains further inorganic fine particles having an average particle diameter which is smaller than the inorganic fine particles.

Claim 10 (Canceled).

Claim 11 (Currently Amended): The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 6, which contains a plurality of developing units, wherein the developers ~~the coloring agent includes colorants having~~ each contain a different ~~colors~~ color.

Claim 12 (Currently Amended): A process cartridge, comprising:

a charge unit charging a photoconductor;

an exposure unit exposing light to the photoconductor to form an image on the photoconductor;

a developer;

a developing unit developing the image formed on the photoconductor with the developer, wherein the developing unit comprises said developer;

a transfer unit transferring the image formed on the photoconductor to a transfer medium;

a cleaning unit cleaning the transfer unit;

wherein the developer includes a combination and a carrier,

wherein the combination includes a base toner containing at least a binding resin and a coloring agent and having a volume average particle diameter ~~less than our equal to 7~~ of 2 to 8 μm, and inorganic fine particles,

wherein the carrier has a magnetic particle,

wherein the base toner satisfies of $105 \leqq$ SF-1 $\leqq 130$, and $120 \leqq$ SF-2 $\leqq 180$, ~~and SF-1 < SF-2,~~

wherein SF-1 = ((absolute maximum length of a particle of the base toner)^2/area of the particle of the base toner)$\times(\pi/4)\times 100$,

wherein SF-2 = (peripheral length of the particle of the base toner)^2/(area of the base toner)$\times(1/4\pi)\times 100$,

wherein the inorganic fine particles have an average particle diameter that ranges between 30 nm to 160 nm and a spherical degree of roundness greater than or equal to 0.98 and less than or equal to 0.996.

wherein the degree of roundness is calculated as a peripheral length of a circle having an area equal to an area of a binarized image of an inorganic fine particle divided by a peripheral length of the image of the inorganic fine particle.

Claim 13 (Previously Presented): The process cartridge as claimed in claim 12, wherein the inorganic fine particles are hydrophobic silica particles.

Claim 14 (Previously Presented): The process cartridge as claimed in claim 12, wherein the inorganic fine particles are formed as spherical shaped hydrophobic silica fine particles using a sol-gel technique

Claim 15 (Original): The process cartridge as claimed in claim 12, wherein the developer contains further inorganic fine particles having an average particle diameter which is smaller than the inorganic fine particles.

Claim 16 (Canceled).

Claim 17 (Currently Amended): A image forming method, comprising the steps of:

charging a photoconductor;

exposing light to the photoconductor to form an image on the photoconductor;

developing the image formed on the photoconductor with a developer;

transferring the image formed on the photoconductor to a transfer medium;

wherein the developer includes a combination and a carrier,

wherein the combination includes a base toner containing at least a binding resin and a coloring agent and having a volume average particle diameter ~~less than our equal to 7~~ of 2 to 8 μm, and inorganic fine particles,

wherein the carrier has a magnetic particle,

wherein the base toner satisfies $105 \leqq$ SF-1 $\leqq 130$, and $120 \leqq$ SF-2 $\leqq 180$, ~~and SF-1 < SF-2,~~

wherein SF-1 = ((absolute maximum length of a particle of the base toner)^2/area of the particle of the base toner) $\times(\pi/4)\times 100$,

wherein SF-2 = (peripheral length of the particle of the base toner)^2/(area of the base toner)$\times(1/4\pi)\times 100$,

wherein the inorganic fine particles have an average particle diameter that ranges between 30 nm to 160 nm and a spherical degree of roundness greater than or equal to 0.98 and less than or equal to 0.996,

wherein the degree of roundness is calculated as a peripheral length of a circle having an area equal to an area of a binarized image of an inorganic fine particle divided by a peripheral length of the image of the inorganic fine particle.

Claim 18 (Previously Presented): The image forming method as claimed in claim 17, wherein the inorganic fine particles are hydrophobic silica particles.

Claim 19 (Previously Presented): The image forming method as claimed in claim 17, wherein the inorganic fine particles are formed as spherical shaped hydrophobic silica fine particles using a sol-gel technique.

Claim 20 (Original): The image forming method as claim in claim 17, wherein the developer contains further inorganic fine particles having an average particle diameter which is smaller than the inorganic fine particles.

Claims 21-29 (Canceled).

DISCUSSION OF THE AMENDMENT

The specification has been amended by capitalizing a trademark.

Claims 1, 6, 12, and 17 have each been amended by incorporating therein the subject matter of Claims 22-25, respectively; by deleting "SF-1 < SF-2"; and by replacing the recital of particle diameter with recital of a volume average particle diameter range, as supported in the specification at page 65, lines 21-23. Claims 22-25 have been canceled.

Claim 6 has been further amended to recite --at least one-- developing unit, and that --each-- developing unit comprises --a-- developer, and that --each-- developer includes a combination and a carrier, as supported in the specification at page 70, line 1ff, and the various Figures, such as Fig. 1 and the description thereof regarding development apparatus 40, beginning at page 71, line 4. Claim 11 has been amended as supported by original Claim 11, and to be consistent with, and supported by the same support relied on for the above-discussed amendment to Claim 6.

No new matter is believed to have been added by the above amendment. Claims 1-9, 11-15, and 17-20 are now pending in the application.